(v) Rural Industries Service Centres (RISCs) have been established by the KVIC for setting up common facility centres (CFCs).

(vi) Financial assistance is provided under Product Development, Design Intervention and Packaging (PRODIP) Scheme for improved designs and packaging of khadi products;

(vii) Credit at a concessional rate of interest of 4 per cent per annual has been provided by banks as per the assessed requirement of the institutions registered with the Khandi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)/State Khadi and Village Industries Boards (KVIBs) under the Interest Subsidy Eligibility Certificate (ISEC) Scheme.

(viii) The 'Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI)' has been launched for developing 34 khadi clusters throughout the country over five years beginning 2005-06.

(d) and (e) The price of khadi cannot be considered as a reason attributable to low sales. The cost of khadi is regulated by a cost chart mechanism which is formulated after taking into consideration not only all factors of inputs but also to ensure certain level of wages to spinners and weavers. The cost chart mechanism bring certain level of uniformity in khadi cost across the country, which induces a sense of confidence among the buyers of khandi products. The rebate on retail sale of khadi provided from budgetary sources of the Government, from time to time, facilitates selling of khandi at reduced price to the customers which helps in boostings of its sale. As regards quality of khandi, khadi being handspun and hand-women, unevenness of the khadi fabric is a unique charateristic of khadi cloth. However, in order to improve the quality of silvers, the raw material for khadi production KVIC has established 6 central sliver plants at various places in the country, which are supplying quality silvers, in order to improve the quality of yarn and thus the khadi cloth.

Protection of SSIs

596. SHRI O.T. LEPCHA: Will the Minister of MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government proposes to protect small scale industries in the country;

(b) if so, the details of steps taken by the Government in this regard; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SHRI MAHAVIR PRASAD): (a) to (c) The promotion and development of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) is primarily the function of the respective State governments. The Central Government, however, supplements the efforts by providing supportive measures by way of enhancing their competitiveness through specific schemes, which *inter alia,* include the schemes for comprehensive need based development of clusters, accessing markets, assistance for technological upgradation, improved infrastructure, better availability of credit, facilities for training and capacity building of entrepreneurs, etc. With a view to further enhancing their competitive edge, the Govt, of India announced a Package for the Promotion of Micro and Small Enterprises in March 2007 a National manufacturing Competitiveness Programme, besides operationalising the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (MSMED) Act, 2006, from 2 October 2006.